

Message Text

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ORIGIN AF-18

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 010637

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TS, US

SUBJECT: MASMOUDI ALLEGATION THAT USG INVOLVED IN HIS
OUSTER

REFERENCE: STATE 9481 (NOTAL); PARIS 1385 (NOTAL);
TUNIS 271 (NOTAL)

1. INASMUCH AS JEUNE AFRIQUE DIRECTOR GENERAL HAS STORY
THAT USG HAD REASSURED MASMOUDI OF HIS ACCEPTABILITY TO
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U.S. (PARIS 1385), DEPARTMENT BELIEVES DEMARCHE PROPOSED
IN TUNIS 271 IS NOT REPEAT NOT REQUIRED. VIEW WIDESPREAD
CIRCULATION JEUNE AFRIQUE NORTH AFRICA AND OTHER ARAB

AREAS, AND GENERAL CREDIBILITY ACCORDED TO ITS ACCOUNTS OF THIRD WORLD POLITICS, PUBLICATION OF STORY REPORTED PARIS 1385 WOULD SERVE OUR PURPOSES BETTER THAN ANY STATEMENT ISSUED BY GOT ITSELF.

2. ACCORDINGLY, DEPARTMENT HAS NO OBJECTION TO AMBASSADOR CALLING ON NEW FOREIGN MINISTER BUT DOES NOT REPEAT NOT BELIEVE ANY REQUEST SHOULD BE MADE THAT GOT PUBLICLY DENY U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN MASMOUDI AFFAIR. (OUR GUESS IS THAT CHATTI WOULD BE RELUCTANT TO APPEAR TO BE PULLING U.S. CHESTNUTS OUT OF FIRE - WHICH WOULD APPEAR TO BE CASE IF ANY GOT DENIAL FOLLOWED MEETING WITH AMERICAN AMBASSADOR.) DEPARTMENT LEAVES TIMING OF ANY REQUEST FOR MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER TO AMBASSADOR'S DISCRETION, BUT WE ASSUME HE WOULD NOT BE AMONG FIRST TO CALL ON FOREIGN MINISTER LEST PURPOSE OF CALL BE MISINTERPRETED AT THIS SENSITIVE JUNCTURE IN INTERNAL TUNISIAN POLITICS.

3. FOR PARIS: DEPARTMENT COMMENDS YOUR ALERT AND HELPFUL REPORTING OF BEN YAHMED'S CONVERSATION. PLEASE REPORT STORY AS IT MAY APPEAR IN JEUNE AFRIQUE OR OTHER PARIS PUBLICATIONS.

4. IF JEUNE AFRIQUE STORY APPEARS AND STIMULATES QUESTIONS, USG OFFICIALS SHOULD REFRAIN FROM COMMENTARY ON SUBSTANCE OF ARTICLE BUT NOTE THAT MASMOUDI WAS COMPLETELY ACCEPTABLE TO WASHINGTON IN HIS CAPACITY AS FOREIGN MINISTER OF COUNTRY WITH WHICH U.S. HAS FRIENDLY TIES OF LONG STANDING. RUSH

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